Dear Senator Harp,   3/21/11

      My name is Austin Stewart and I am a Sophomore in the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience program in Woodbury. I live in Naugatuck and I attend this regional agriscience school choice Program because when I grow up I would like to become a veterinarian. As a vet, I can treat and care for the future pets of the community in which I would reside in. During my time in the agriscience program I have learned so much which would not be taught in any other type of school. By attending this school I get a head start on a college education for vet techs.

      Over 50,000 citizens are employed in agriculture related jobs; all of which are vital to the economy of the State of Connecticut. The agricultural industry is very important to the state of Connecticut, without it all the 50,000 citizens employed in agriculture could be out of work and without a job. Allowing that to happen will hurt the economy of Connecticut.

      The FFA is a nation wide program, helping countless kids to achieve their future desired job. I also have a volunteer position at a humane society; because of my involvement in the agriscience program. Agriculture is incorporated into everyone's life without them even noticing it. That is why it is of great importance to allow such agriscience schools to continue, so that the future generations of Connecticut can thrive.
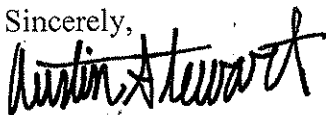
      I am writing this letter to encourage you to **please urge the Appropriations Committee to pledge 9 million dollars of the school choice funding increases proposed in the Governor's budget to the state's 19 regional (vo-ag) agriscience programs.**

      Our agriscience programs have been drastically underfunded for over 20 years as compared to the magnet schools, charter schools, vocational technical schools and the other school choice funding programs. (Please see attached flyer with details)

      This will allow hundreds of more students like me to enroll in these successful programs so they will have the same positive experience I am having now.

      Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Austin Stewart

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